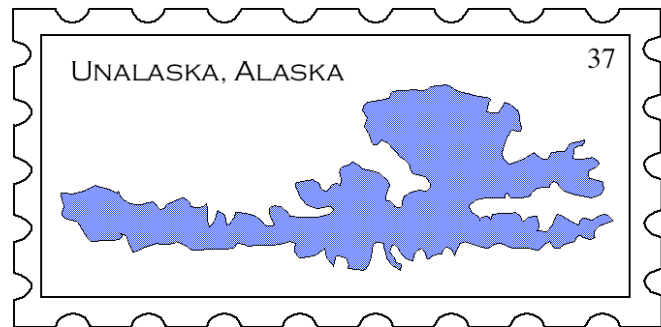


## OANUIPIT FRIENDS!

My name is Kirima, and I'm a lifelong resident of the Aleutian Islands. I just said "hello" to you in Inuit – my native language! I have been instructed to tell you about the Aleutian Islands since you will be learning all about my homeland. I



am so excited to tell you about the Aleutian Islands, especially since some of my relatives living in Anchorage are coming here for the first time!

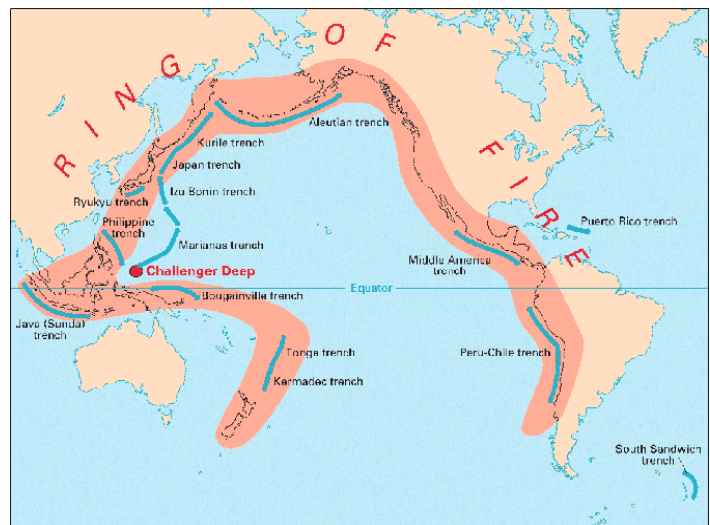


The Aleutian Islands are simply an extension of the Alaskan Peninsula. If you poured off the water on Earth, the islands would connect Russia and the United States.

Most of the Aleutian Islands are part of Alaska, so we are all Americans here, just like you guys! The islands are simply an extension of the Alaskan Peninsula, and if you look at the map, the Aleutians are sort of like a bridge between Asia and North America. In fact, the extreme western Aleutian Islands are part of Russia. I'm sure you think that's really weird! We had some visitors here near our neighborhood the other day that thought it was really strange that Russia is so close even though they were still on American soil.

The Aleutian Islands are divided into four

main groups of islands – the Fox, Andreanof, Rat, and Near. The islands are all in a curved line, stretching towards the southwest from the Alaskan peninsula and then curving towards the northwest as it slowly becomes Russian territory. This curved formation is due to the volcanic cracks that correspond to the location of these islands. The islands all formed as a result of volcanic activity that occurred many years ago. These curved formations of islands are a common occurrence all over the Pacific Ocean because volcanic activity exists all around the edges of the ocean. This is commonly known as the Pacific Ring of Fire.



This is a picture of the Ring of Fire. Volcanoes exist all along the edges of the Pacific Ocean.

<http://www.crystalinks.com/rof.html>

There is a volcano called Mount Makushin, which is 1,735 m (5,690 ft) tall. Mount Makushin is visible from our house. We live in a settlement called Unalaska, which is the largest community of people within the Aleutian Islands. Unalaska is an island of about 4,300 people, which is about half of the entire Aleutian Islands population. The Native American population, of which I am a part, makes up about one-third of the total number. My parents, my brother Jordin, and I have lived here in the same house for as long as I can remember. Each morning, I walk out and climb on top of the hill nearby to see the mountain. In fact, my name, Kirima, means “hill” in the Inuit language. Cool, huh?



This is a picture of Mount Makushin.

<http://www.skimountaineer.com/ROF/ROF.php?name=Makushin>

If you ever want to visit, you'll have to come on an airplane because there's no other way to get here. You could use ships and boats, but you would have to be an expert navigator since the coasts here are very jagged and rocky. Most of the coastlines around our islands are lined with steep cliffs and mountains.

One of the coolest geological features of the area is the formation of new landforms. As a result of underwater volcanic eruptions, the two recently formed volcanic islands of Bogoslof and Grewingk now lie a little bit west of Unalaska. These new islets (very small islands) formed in the past 250 years, with Bogoslof appearing in 1796 and Grewingk following nearly a century later in 1883. How weird is that – to wake up one morning and see that there's *new* land in the ocean?

Many of the volcanoes on the Aleutian Islands are still active, and my mother, who is a geologist with the state science bureau, regularly goes from island to island to study them. Earthquakes are also a common occurrence in the surrounding area. They become more frequent and larger just before a volcano erupts.

But think about coming here to visit! For one thing, in the summer months, the sun is out for almost 24 hours! I bet that never happens where you live!

Talk to you soon!  
Kirima Chinqua  
54°N 167°W